

## **2005 REPORT TO CONGRESS UNDER P.L. 106-107 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)**

### **Participation in the Government-wide Streamlining and Grants.gov Efforts**

EPA has actively participated from the beginning in the P.L. 106-107 efforts to provide citizens easy access to federal grant opportunities. The EPA liaison for Grants.gov initiatives is a full-time staff person who works in the Policy, Information and Training Branch of the Office of Grants and Debarment (OGD). EPA has at least one representative on each of the following workgroups/teams: Research and Related Subcommittee, Single Audits, Mandatory Grants, and the Pre Award Work Group.

EPA is active in grantee organizations such as the National Grants Partnership and the Federal Demonstration Partnership.

EPA committed one staff person to OMB's Task Force for the Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB) initiative. Additionally, EPA committed one person to the Task Force's Drafting Group and one person to the Task Force's Vetting Group. These Groups are responsible for developing and refining the operating model and business case for the GMLoB initiative. EPA made full funding contributions to the Grants.gov effort, and to the GMLoB.

EPA remains an active participant in the P.L. 106-107 related groups that assist in the definition of standard data elements, the simplification of forms, the creation of the Research and Related application package and the Mandatory SF 424 application form. EPA also participated in the SF 424 Version 2 analysis workgroup.

EPA successfully increased usage of the two key electronic functions available through Grants.gov that announce grant opportunities and provide electronic grant application packages to the public. EPA regularly participates in the monthly Grants.gov Stakeholder meeting.

The Director, OGD, is a member of the Grants Executive Board, consisting of representatives from grant-making agencies. This Board exercises oversight of the Grants.gov initiative's strategy and timetables, ensures agency consensus, provides executive sponsorship for Grants.gov outcomes in agencies, and resolves interagency issues.

## **Internal Efforts to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification and Assess Impact of Changes**

### **General Approach**

In April 2003, EPA issued its first-ever long term Grants Management Plan (Plan). Goal 3 of the Plan, "Leverage Technology to Improve Program Performance", commits the Agency to support P.L. 106-107 initiatives. In furtherance of this goal, EPA's E-Gov Workgroup meets quarterly to discuss E-Gov initiatives such as Grants.gov. This group is an oversight group of senior managers tracking progress in implementing E-Gov activities.

In addition, OGD ensures that internal grant policies developed under the Plan are implemented consistent with P.L. 106-107. For example, in implementing EPA's revised grants competition policy, OGD provided guidance and training to program offices on EPA's Grants.gov Apply objectives, including an objective for FY 2006 that EPA program offices link 100% of competitive announcements posted on Grants.gov Find to a Grants.gov Apply electronic application package.

EPA is working to enhance its grants management infrastructure and framework for communication, participation, and training within the Agency. The Agency provides outreach to internal and external constituencies through the internet, training, conferences, and other forums. A full-time staff person in the Grants Administration Division (GAD) of OGD maintains the intranet and internet pages which are used to provide current information on grants management policies, OMB notices, and electronic grants issues. A national Grants Customer Relations Council, which is comprised of program and grants staff and managers, convenes each month to discuss current and pending matters in grants management (e.g., audit issues, new requirements, etc.) The GAD Director, or the Chief, Policy, Information and Training Branch, GAD, chairs each meeting.

OGD is preparing a number of outreach tools for the public and internal program and regional partners. These efforts include a Guide to Grants.gov manual, brochures targeting the external customer and internal EPA program and regional offices, a letter to EPA grant recipients encouraging their use of Grants.gov, and a newsletter.

OGD will continue to provide training to EPA recipients as well as to EPA project officers, grants staff and senior management on grants management issues. The Grants.gov initiative is an important part of all training and citizen outreach efforts. OGD is in the process of developing an on-line training program for managers and supervisors in grants management, which will include Grants.gov information.

## **Implementing the Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process**

### **A. Grants.gov FIND:**

EPA has required, as part of the Agency's grants competition policy, that synopses for EPA competitive grant announcements be posted to Grants.gov Find to ensure agency compliance with OMB policy. The Find site is well received by the EPA applicant community and feedback is positive.

### **B. Announcement Template**

In November 2003, EPA's Grants Competition Advocate circulated the final announcement template to members of EPA's Grants Customer Relations Council. At the same time, he issued guidance on the use of the template. Requirements for use of the template are now contained in EPA's revised grants competition policy which became effective on January 15, 2005. The Grants Competition Advocate's office also posts synopses of competitive announcements on Grants.gov FIND and monitors the use of the template.

OGD will deploy a database in October 2005 to store and report on announcements linking them to the Grant Award System and streamlining the internal process of issuing announcements. This database includes questions on Geospatial information and supports the collection of this important data element. Additionally, this database will provide the capability to track EPA's state grants, earmarks, and other non-discretionary grants and cooperative agreements.

### **C. Grants.gov APPLY**

EPA is very active regarding implementation of an interface with Grants.gov Apply. EPA completed a System-to-System protocol with Grants.gov and configured our Web Services to receive electronic applications from Grants.gov Apply through EPA's Central Data Exchange.

Internally, EPA deployed an applications database that receives the electronic application package from Grants.gov. If the application is approved for funding, the data is included in a record that migrates to award status in the back-office Integrated Grants Management System.

Beginning October 1, FY 2006, EPA will link all competitive announcements posted on Grants.gov Find to application packages on Grants.gov Apply, providing the public the option to apply electronically.

EPA has met its Grants.gov Apply goals for FY 2005. Specifically, during FY 2005 EPA posted over 70 programs with Grants.gov Apply capability. This figure includes an Earmark, several State grant programs, and the first Fellowship packages posted to

Apply. During FY 05 EPA also has received over 300 applications through Grants.gov Apply.

OGD has communicated all new requirements, especially Data Universal Number System (DUNS) and Central Contractor Registration (CCR), to the national Grants Customer Relations Council and reinforced communication with memos, fact sheets, and policy directives. OGD is also keeping the Agency's senior-level Grants Management Council apprised of Grants.gov issues. In the spring OGD provided access and a successful forum for the Grants.gov internet WebCast 'Spread the Word'. Additionally, OGD will send a letter to all EPA grant recipients encouraging them to use Grants.gov Apply.

A significant streamlining barrier experienced by EPA is the fact that OMB has not required that all grantees register in Grants.gov, regardless of whether they use Grants.gov. EPA prefers that all potential applicants that intend to apply for a grant be required to register in the CCR as is required for contractors by the FAR. During the past year EPA has worked with Dunn and Bradstreet to align data with our internal recipient address book.

EPA continues in its commitment to partner with other federal agencies under P.L. 106-107 to deliver service to citizens better, faster, cheaper and more simply.